

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

All the Year Round

A Weekly Journal

CONDUCTED BY
CHARLES DICKENS.

No. 112.—THIRD SERIES. SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 1891. PRICE TWOPENCE.

"THE LAIRD O' COCKPEN."

By "RITA."

Author of "Dame Durden," "Gretchen," "Darby and Joan," "Sheba," etc., etc.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I. A RIFT IN THE CLOUDS.

CAN this be Corriemoor? I rub my eyes, and ask myself the question doubtfully sometimes. Corriemoor, gay with girls' blithe laughter and merry voices; Corriemoor, with every passage and corridor echoing with men's steps and restless movements, and the rustle of dresses, and all the stir and movement of young life!

We are all here, and a week has passed, and to-morrow is the day fixed for starting on the yachting trip to the lochs. I am still filled with wonder at the Laird's geniality, at Mrs. Campbell's hospitable excitement and interest, at the popularity of Douglas Hay, and the unfailing mirth and good-nature of the M'Kaye girls.

They have struck up a great friendship with Bella; but I am not one bit jealous. Of me they seem a little doubtful; they have confided to Bella that I am so grave and serious—they cannot quite understand why. Surely as mistress of this beautiful place I ought to be perfectly happy and content.

I wonder to myself if they know how far happier they are in possession of youth, freedom, and the gaiety and innocent mirth that can only spring from natures perfectly heart-whole, and as little troubled by sentiment as the bird is by a summer's day cloud.

Dinner is over to-night, and we are all fitting in and out of each other's rooms, intent on last preparations, and endeavouring to close refractory boxes, as luggage has been strictly limited. The girls are bubbling over with mirth and excitement. Like myself, they have never been on a yacht, and curiosity is rife as to what sort of life it will be, and what sized vessel is to transport us from place to place.

But at last our preparations are complete. The luggage is despatched in advance, and when we join the yacht we are amazed to find it quite a large vessel, of some sixty tons.

The weather is delicious—a blue-grey sky, misty and cloudy; a faint, warm breeze from the south-west, ruffling the water into mimic waves. We explore the yacht with eagerness and delight—the saloon, the state room, the dainty hangings and decorations, the innumerable inventions for comfort and convenience in a limited space; the exquisite and delicate neatness of every detail—these are matters of wonder and excitement as well as novelty.

There is a small piano in the saloon, pictures on the walls, flowers everywhere; it is a veritable fairy floating palace. The Laird has taken all the arrangements of the tour on himself, and he and the sailing-master are on very friendly terms. We sit on deck in the quiet afternoon greyness and watch the white sails winging us up the broad channel, between Bute and Arran. The distant coast looks pale and hazy; the bays that open here and there catch strange lights and shadows of a subdued and dreamy kind. Before us, the hills of Bute, and Loch Fyne, and the shores of Corval and Cantyre, are bathed in a soft glow, which lights up the tints of

fern and gorse, and the faint promise of bloom from the heather.

We reach Tarbert soon after sunset, and anchor in the pretty little harbour. There is some discussion as to whether we will go to the hotel or remain on the yacht. The decision is strongly in favour of the latter course; so we dine in the pretty little saloon, and, after dinner, assemble on deck and watch the pallor of twilight fade into starry glory, wonderfully clear and beautiful against the dark, mountainous background. Then the moon comes up bright and resplendent, and lights up the broad bosom of the loch, and the dusky heights of the little town, and all the craggy wildness of the surrounding scenery, and the picturesque beauty of Inversnaid. Gradually the merry chatter and laughter of the girls grows subdued; a stillness and soberness falls upon us all, only broken by an occasional murmur of admiration at some change in the throbbing wonder of the heavens, or glow and sparkle of the rippling water, where moon and starlight are reflected in broken gleams. Presently, as the dusk deepens, and the moving shadows descend, the sound of music comes floating from below.

I know the touch and the voice only too well. Softly and sadly the "Farewell to Lochaber" falls on the hushed stillness, to be followed by another and yet another of the old, sweet, plaintive airs which I had been used to hear so often in the old days.

The old days! How near they seem tonight. How many soft and dangerous memories throng to my heart at sound of remembered words and familiar strains.

A brief pause, and then we hear the prelude to "Auld Robin Gray."

The tears were wet on my cheek ere the sweet, sad words had breathed their last echo. Why had he sung that song? Surely he might have remembered— A voice broke on my ear—the voice of the old Scotchman, Robert M'Kaye.

"If the laddie could do nothing else," he said, huskily, and with no attempt to conceal his emotion, "he might win tears from a stone wi' that voice of his. I mind me well in the bush yonder, how wonderful it seemed to hear the auld tunes. I could ha'e greeted just like any bairn when he would sit and sing to us in the hot, moonlight nights; and my lassies, well, nothing would do but they must come 'home,' as they called it, and see and hear for themselves all about Scotland and the Scotch folk, and get to know about Clans and the

Gathering o' the Highlanders, and the way they lived, and what a 'loch' was like, and the colour o' the heather which they had never seen, and moors, and mountains, and deer forests, and Heaven only knows what all. But, I'm bound to say, Mrs. Campbell, that had it not been for your gude man's offer of this yacht, they'd never have had a chance of seeing these places as they ought to be seen. I tell them they're not half grateful enough."

"Who's not grateful enough, M'Kaye?" said the bluff, hearty voice of the Laird, just behind us. "Here, Athole, lassie, I've brought you a shawl to hap yourself. It's chilly sitting here in the night air."

He wrapped a warm tartan round my shoulders as he spoke. I was somewhat surprised at so unwonted an attention on his part.

He and Mr. M'Kaye moved off, each with his favourite pipe aglow. I watched the stalwart figures, and felt glad that the Laird had a companion so much after his own heart. He was far more genial and pleasant now than I had ever known him.

My meditations were interrupted by Huel Penryth.

"Are you not tired of sitting there so long, Mrs. Campbell?" he asked. "Would you not like a walk over our limited deck space?"

I rose at once. I did feel rather cramped and chilled, though I had not noticed it before. We walked to and fro in the quiet starlight, voices and snatches of song and music from below came to us from time to time.

"They are all there with Douglas," said Penryth, presently. "He has a wonderful knack at music! Just set him down, and he will go on—on—playing—singing—drifting from melody to melody. That is the sort of music I like. There seems a harmonious understanding between instrument and player, notes and sound. I never tire of listening to him. You cannot imagine what it was to have him in that wild bush life. The M'Kayses were simply 'daft' about him—to use their own expression."

"I wonder," I said, "that he did not marry one of them. I'm sure Jessie could never say him nay."

His eyes flashed quickly into mine, in the clear betraying moonlight.

"He is young yet," he said; "too young to commit that fatal mistake. A man should be quite sure of his own mind and his own strength before giving himself

up to any woman. Unfortunately, we too often allow passion to blind us, and waste all that is best in our hearts on women utterly worthless."

"Do you think," I asked, quickly, "that Douglas has done that? Did he ever say so?"

My jealous thoughts flew swiftly to Mrs. Dunleith. Perhaps she had played a part in Douglas Hay's life that I knew nothing about—but for which he suffered.

"He has never been very confidential," said Huel Penryth. "Men seldom are, I fancy. But he has lost youth and faith. A man has generally to thank a woman for that."

"I think," I said, coldly, "that we have as little—or as much—to thank men for."

"A case of quid pro quo, you fancy. But I think you idealise more than we do. You do not make sufficient allowance for a nature, physique, mind that are different to your own. Women are shut away from most temptations; men—thrown forcibly into them. You would have the intensity of passion, the purity of youth, the strength and fire of manhood, the chivalry of romance, and yet—a life colourless as an untempted angel's! To fail on one point is to fail in all. Women will forgive any crime save infidelity."

"Is it not the greatest against you? Would you pardon it in us for any excuse we might offer?"

"The two cases must always be relative to their surroundings; a man's heart may never waver from the devotion it has once bestowed; but his attention, his interest, his passions may do so."

I shook my head.

"It is hard to convince a woman of that; and to a woman who is innocent, and loving, and passionately faithful it seems that what she gives she should also receive. It is surely her right. What a hard and fast line you draw for us. No word, no look, no thought must waver; but for yourselves—the wide world and perfect liberty, and a passive acceptance of what you choose to bring back to us."

"Is not your nature somewhat unforgiving, Mrs. Campbell?"

"Perhaps," I said, bitterly. "But how am I to help that if it is my nature?"

"You are quoting me against myself," he said, with another of those quick penetrating glances. "It is possible to modify, to soften, to subdue. But I misjudge you by that question. Your nature is not so relentless as you pretend; but circum-

stances have helped to mar its original gentleness."

"Our conversation is drifting into personalities. After all, what does it matter about one's mental discomforts? Women's lives especially are made up of minutiae. They can get excitement, pleasure, interest out of small things. We flatter ourselves that we play an all-important part in your lives; but we do not really, not the generality of us, unless——"

"Well!" he said, as I paused and stood for a moment looking over the quiet loch, with the star-light mirrored in its depths.

"Perhaps," I said, hesitatingly, "I ought not to say it; but I was about to add, unless we should chance to be very beautiful, or very—wicked."

"I think you are right," he said.

CHAPTER II. IN THE DAWN.

THE idle, dreamy days drifted on, and the white wings bore us from place to place, and I was fain to confess that the Laird had not exaggerated the wild and picturesque beauty of his native land.

Perhaps my eyes had grown weary of that one great stretch of moorland around and beyond Corriemoor. At all events, they were ready to delight in the ever-shifting, changeful beauty that now they rested upon. For, up here in this region of loch and mountain, there were perpetual feasts of colour and loveliness: the blue, and grey, and purple, and gold of the sky; the brown and ruddy colouring of the hills; the soft floating mists that ever and again would part and reveal undreamt-of beauties; the rippling, azure water; the great dashes of shadow where the lochs narrowed between the towering heights. Then, in some sudden pause of stillness would come the soft whistle of the curlew; or the stir of moving wings; or the splash of the silver-scaled salmon leaping into air and sunshine, and waking echoes in the quiet summer noon.

Sometimes, when the wind failed us, as it did for two or three days at a time, we would make excursions among the chains of islands—the men doing their best to shoot any eatable wild fowl for our larder, or to catch the fish that swarmed in glittering shoals through the clear sapphire waters. Now and then we would land at some fishing village of stalwart, brown men and bare-armed, short-kirtled women, and the Laird would talk to them in their uncouth-sounding language, to the evident delight

of both parties, and wonderful would be the stories of dangers, and toils, and of hair-breadth escapes which he would gather from them.

I must confess that they were a marvel to me—their cheerfulness and content, their genial, yet shy grace of manner, and the hospitable offerings of herrings or mackerel, which were invariably made, and for which no payment would ever be taken, unless in the shape of a "dram," or some gift of a woollen shawl or petticoat for wife or bairn.

Again there would be the ever-beautiful spectacle of dashing waves breaking white and stormy in the gloom of some deep sound, or some days of gloomy skies broken up by sudden sunlight, or nights of misty moonshine, gleaming on shore and bay. And then day would dawn fresh and sparkling, and there would be the stir of feet on deck, and white sails spread to catch the welcome breeze, and the pleasant lapping of water as the yacht sped merrily along to fresh scenes and new beauties.

How genial and pleasant the Laird had become! I scarcely recognised the quiet, stolid, Donald Campbell in this bustling and quaintly humorous personage, who cracked jokes with the sailors, and took his turn at the steering, and was so interested in the fisher fleets and life of the lonely islanders; who made light of all difficulties, even the hardships of failing wind and un-supplied larder, which occasionally troubled us, and only laughed when we were blown out of our course by contrary winds, or wasted long hours in fruitless "tacking" to gain some harbour.

On the whole we were not a badly-assorted party, as yachting-parties go, for limited space and companionship are not always conducive to harmony. I could not but notice, however, as the days drifted by, that Robert M'Kaye's attention to Bella became somewhat marked and impressive. Invariably she was the companion of his walks or excursions. The two girls seemed always apportioned to Douglas and the Laird, and Huel Penryth to me. Thrown, as we were, together, Douglas Hay's avoidance and coldness to me were almost noticeable; but I had schooled myself into accepting our present position as the safest, and, indeed, the only one left us to adopt. I wondered, sometimes, why he had agreed to join our expedition. I felt certain that he, of all the party, was uncomfortable, ill at ease, and

restless. He would laugh and jest with the girls in the old, random manner; he would sing and play to us in the evening, or inaugurate a reel, or strathspey, or schottische on deck; but the laughter wanted the old, heart-whole ring, and the dance seemed to lack the gay abandon which had once been so characteristic of his movements.

One morning I rose very early, and went down to the shore. A cold wind was blowing from the sea, the sky was still grey and colourless, waiting for the warmth of the sun, which had not yet appeared above the heights, or touched the black hollows of the tossing waves.

The yacht lay at anchor some distance off. We were to go on board after breakfast, and proceed up the Cinan Canal, making Oban our next halting place, if the wind favoured us. I had slept badly all night, and feeling too feverish and restless to remain in bed any longer, had resolved to take a long walk before returning to the comparative inactivity of yacht life.

Sky and sea and coast had a strangely weird look under the dusk of the sunless morning; but as I went on over the rough rocks and boulders, a strange light burned like gold through the filmy mist that hung like a curtain in the East. I stood still and watched it—breathless with sudden wonder. That colourless film was suddenly transformed into a rose-coloured veil of transparent and ethereal beauty; and that again was suddenly lifted and swept asunder as by a living hand, while all around its edges, and all around the clouds that drifted seawards, broke a thousand sharp jewel-like lines of flame; and then over the dull-hued water spread a flush of faint pink, deepening into yellow gold, as the sun rose higher and yet higher. Then came the stir of awaking life in the gorse and heather where the young birds fluttered joyously, undisturbed as yet by sportsman's gun, and the slow flapping of wings, as the stately herons sailed landwards to some rocky pool, half hidden among the tall, dark reeds.

I stood there with clasped hands, drinking in the beauty of the scene, and the loneliness and strangeness of it. It was the first time I had seen the sun rise and the day waken amidst those mountain solitudes. I felt selfishly glad to be the only spectator, to feel that I and the new day had the world to ourselves, with no intrusive voice or presence to disturb our enjoyment.

I felt that I needed no companionship save my own; that even the best loved voice would jar on my feelings then. I sank down on the rough stones, and for a moment hid my face in my hands, overcome by a rush of feelings that were sharp as pain, and sweet as joy—and yet moved me rather to tears than to words. As I lifted my head at last, and looked up at the brightening sky, I saw I was no longer alone. Some ten yards from me—his arms folded across his chest—his eyes fixed coldly but intently on my face, stood—Douglas Hay.

The first surprise of seeing him so near, and alone, was almost a shock to me. I did not move. I only looked quietly back at him, while a strange stillness and numbness seemed to chill my heart, and creep through my veins.

"I saw you come out," he said, "and I followed you."

I was silent. The abruptness of his words, the pallor of his face, the strange look in his eyes, held me speechless with a sudden, vague terror. For one swift moment the hands of Time went back; we were standing together under the brooding darkness of the Hill of Fairies, and the light of sunset—not of sunrise—was upon a pleading face that vainly sought relenting or forgiveness in mine.

I sat there, waiting for further words, my eyes on the roughened water, that still looked green and grey in the morning mists. It seemed to me that in its restlessness and mystery of distance it was not unlike the human lives that meet and seem to touch, and yet can drift so utterly, utterly apart.

It might have been a moment, an hour, that Douglas stood there, pale, and stern, and watchful; then he came nearer, and seated himself beside me on the rough rocks.

"Why were you crying just now?" he asked, abruptly.

"I was not—" I stammered; then suddenly put up my hand to wet cheeks, and felt confused at the needless falsehood. "I—I hardly know," I stammered. "I had been watching the sun rise; it was all so wonderful, so beautiful. And yet there is something sad in such beauty; it recalls youth, and innocence, and peace. If only the new day would wash our souls clean from sins and errors, as it seems to cleanse the world from gloom and darkness!"

"Fanciful, but impossible," he said,

with something almost like a sneer in his voice. "I think the day would have enough to do if that task was set before it."

Presently he continued :

"I was watching the sunrise, too, but certainly it had no such softening effect upon me as you seem to have experienced. I am sick of the sea and the mountains, sick of the daylight that has no hope in its dawn, no rest in its death. Athole, do you remember the day we went to the Witch's Cave?"

"Yes," I said, wonderingly. "How long ago it seems!"

"And her prophecy has come true," he said, gloomily. "You did marry another man; and yet— Oh, how sure I felt of you there!"

"And I—of you," I said. "But why speak of it again? Have we not agreed to bury the past? It is so useless to recall that time."

"I know it. Do you suppose I would have come here—have consented to become your husband's guest—if I had not thought that I was strong enough to keep the past in the background? You cannot say that I have forced myself upon your notice. I flatter myself I have grown quite an adept at self-effacement."

His face so hard, his voice so bitter, and yet— Oh, that look in your eyes, Douglas, Douglas!

"It was not easy always," he went on. "Perhaps Hu'l's praises of you made it harder. I—I think I am jealous of him, though Heaven knows I have no right to be. Sometimes I grow half mad listening to, and joining in with, those chattering magpies of girls, and straining my ears all the time for the low, sweet, even tones I remember so well, which are so kind, and gentle, and sweet to every one but me."

"Oh, Douglas," I said, and a sudden rush of pity thrilled my pulses.

Involuntarily I turned to him and laid my hand on his arm.

"I am sorry for you, indeed, indeed I am; but it is best that I should be cold and hard, or seem it. If there were any use—any hope—"

My voice broke; a sob caught the words and stifled them.

"I know I behaved very badly," he said, his own voice unsteady and uncertain now. "Oh, if you knew the times and times that I have cursed my folly! Sometimes I look back, and I cannot believe that

we are really parted ; I see that room, and you in your white dress, and I hear the very music of the reel we danced, and—”

“And you are singing again of the ‘braw woer,’ I said. “Did you think you left an aching heart behind you, that night, Douglas ?”

“No,” he said, “I did not. I was jealous, miserable, reckless. Then came a scene with my father, and, in one of my bad impulses, I tore off to Edinburgh.”

“And to—Mrs. Dunleith ?”

His face flushed.

“Were you really jealous of her, Athole ? It seems so strange. A man cannot be false, or what he considers false, when he loves one woman. All others are but pale reflections. He sees her face, he hears her voice, even as he looks into other eyes and seems to listen to other voices ; and his clasp has no passion, and his kiss no rapture ; and weariness and disgust are all he knows, even after brief forgetfulness. Ah ! believe me, there never yet was a man who tried to cheat himself into such forgetfulness and did not suffer a thousand-fold for every moment of oblivion he purchased.”

The water brightened at our feet, the birds’ songs rose louder and clearer, as the day wooed them from bough and brake. The great heights took light and colour from the glowing sky. The throbbing pulses of Nature beat afresh in the waking world. Only to us, poor drift-weed of poor humanity, came no gladness, no hope—nothing but the sorrow of vain regrets, the stab of remembered pain.

Again Douglas spoke.

“You used to be very truthful, Athole ; almost bluntly so. I wish you would tell me why you were crying when I found you. Are you unhappy ?”

My eyes met his, answering his question before my lips.

“Yes ; and yet not altogether unhappy. It is a passive, not an active condition of mind, born chiefly of dissatisfaction. Now, are you satisfied ?”

“Perfectly.”

The answer was concise and cold. Again silence fell between us. The sun seemed veiled, the stillness grew almost painful. I moved restlessly in my rocky seat.

He started and looked down at me.

“Shall we walk on ?” he said, “unless you are going back to the hotel ; but no one will be up yet, I am sure.”

“I am not going back yet,” I said, with a little shiver. I felt cold and cramped after sitting there so long.

“May I come with you ?” he asked ceremoniously. “Don’t say ‘yes’ if you’d rather not. You needn’t play the hypocrite with me.”

“If you wish—you may walk with me,” I said.

He held out his hand to assist me over the rough stones, and we walked silently on together in the golden morning light.

“Do you know,” said Douglas suddenly, as we ascended the hill side, leaving the loch behind us, “that I once perpetrated the folly of keeping a diary. It was when I had parted from Scotland and—and you—and was on my way to a new land and new scenes. I began it on the ship that was wrecked, and, strange to say, although I lost most of my possessions, I managed to save that. I found it the other day among a lot of papers and letters. I wonder if you would care to see it ?”

“Indeed, I should,” I exclaimed, eagerly.

“It will give you some idea of my life and feelings at that time,” he said, gloomily ; “and also an account of my acquaintance with Penryth. You like him, do you not ?”

“Very much,” I said.

“I am glad of that. You may enjoy his companionship uninterruptedly from to-day.”

“Why ?” I asked, startled at the announcement. “What do you mean ?”

“I am not going on with you all,” he said in a strained, cold voice. “I—I—well, there’s no use beating about the bush—I can’t bear it any longer, Athole. I—I have over-tasked my strength, that is the plain, simple truth. I have tried to play at friendship. I have tried to avoid you. I have schooled myself to betray no feeling ; to pretend that we two who once loved so dearly are but the veriest strangers. Well, I have done my best ; a man can do no more. But, I tell you frankly and honestly, it is beyond me. What your own feelings are it is not for me to say. Heaven grant you may never know the fever, and agony, and turmoil of mine ! For as surely as we stand here now, Athole—the world our own, the silence and solemnity of the new day our only witness—I swear to you that I never loved nor can love any living woman save yourself. And coldness, and estrangement, and effort, and duty, and honour—what have they done ? What have they

proved? Only that I love you more madly than ever I did in the years that are gone. . . . Oh, if only we could have them back!"

THE CAREER OF INVALID.

It is an agreeable thing to be an invalid—in moderation; with, of course, the added condition that one has no need to be tinker, tailor, or aught else for the sake of a livelihood. With five hundred a year and upwards, the professional invalid may enjoy life in a way of which his robust brother toiling and moiling in a pestilential city from January to December of each year has little idea. He has no anxieties, except about his portmanteau. He steers clear of those precious bonds of domesticity which, though delightful enough at times, are also at times galling, and are always a forcible restraint upon the liberty of the subject. He is lord of himself. He possesses those two priceless privileges—as Schopenhauer reckoned them—leisure and independence. No man can say unto him: "Thou shalt do this; thou mayst not do that."

When other men, whose constitutions would satisfy the most rigorous of Insurance Societies, are, with the appearance of the dear fogs of November, beginning their annual course of catarrh, our friend the accomplished invalid is on the eve of his annual pleasure trip. He prattles about it as "exile," or as a step upon which his very life depends; but you must not believe more than a third of what he says in the matter. He pretends that he is mightily perplexed and pained by doubt as to whither he shall fly to escape the winter of his distress. His rooms are littered with guide books and letters from obliging British Consuls. The tone of these latter sufficiently illustrates the frame of mind of our poor harassed wanderer. Here is one of them:

"MY DEAR SIR.—It gives me very great pleasure to answer your enquiries about Timbuctoo. I will take them seriatim.

"1. The climate here from November to April—inclusive—is as nearly perfect as any climate can be. The days are warm certainly, but not too warm for active exercise. The nights are dry, with a comparatively slight fall in the temperature. It rains about twenty times in the six months, and very nice the rains are. You

can almost see the grain grow after our showers. There is not more risk of a fever here than of small-pox in the old country. If you take care not to eat too much, and avoid the water—there's capital wine to make up for that—you will do well enough here. Maximum of my thermometer last year during this period, eighty degrees; minimum, fifty-five degrees. How does that suit you?

"2 As to game: there's any quantity—from lions to rabbits. Bring all your weapons, and you will find each will come in. Ammunition is rather scarce in these parts, so a cargo of it would be advisable. I venture to say you will not be disappointed with the record of your bags and booty when you leave us—you see I am quite expecting you!

"3. Accommodation is not very first-class, as you may suppose likely in so new a country. The one hotel is dirty, and not fit for you. But don't let that keep you from running down here. My wife and I will make you at home, if you will let us. She—my wife—is from your county, and knows something of your people. We have been married only a year; but a little fresh society will do us both all the good in the world. Young married people have, I fancy, a knack of making fools of themselves unless they are early broken of the trick. Your room is already decided upon; and if you like uncommon landscapes, the view from your window ought to please you. It is a jumble of palm-trees and mountains behind hard to beat. So that's settled.

"4. Society—from this standpoint, as you will infer from the above, Timbuctoo is somewhat flat. It isn't as lively as Algiers, nor yet Tangier. All the same, we can assure you a carpet dance two or three times a week, as there are Consuls of all the big nations with their families, as well as a few score visitors, more or less, like yourself—some with their wives and daughters. The place is looking up more every year, as it becomes better known. Last season, for example, we had Dean Bagshot, and all his girls—five. He was so charmed with his experiences that, no doubt, he will crack up Timbuctoo among his friends. This may bring us a number of the clergy with their women-folk—I don't know what your tastes are in that direction.

"Well, well, how I am rambling on, to be sure! You see, my dear sir, down here one has no little difficulty in killing time to one's satisfaction, and so I don't mind

boring you with a few pages of letter in answer to your note.

"However, I think I have replied to your enquiries, and, I hope, I have also said enough to make you feel that you will be heartily welcome at the Consulate when you can turn up. Send me a line as soon as possible; otherwise I may think you are not coming, and may offer the room to some one else.

"Believe me, my dear sir,

"Faithfully yours,

"FARQUHAR MUNCHAUSEN"

This letter is but one of several of the like kind, and our invalid is puzzled to death to determine which he shall say "yes" to. It is all very well to live in a Consulate, especially when the Consul is a newly married man; but it would break his heart to create even an appearance of sponging on a British representative, unless he saw his way clear to a reciprocation of the courtesy. Besides, it is just possible Timbuctoo may really be too warm, in spite of the Consul's letter. It matters not one rap about the language. The people of Timbuctoo, like the people elsewhere, may be trusted to understand our friend's English if it is to their profit to do so. Poor travellers, with hardly anything a year, are, of course, bound to learn the different languages. But not so the average vagabond invalid with an income that keeps him aloof from all thoughts about ways and means. He can hold his head high in the midst of a storm of abuse in a foreign tongue, and feel not a whit the worse for it, though he realises by intuition that it is levelled at him.

It is at least possible that, after replying to the Consul at Timbuctoo, and saying he hopes to be with him in three or four weeks' time, he changes his mind at the last moment, and runs to the Engadine. There he finds the thermometer a score or two of degrees below freezing point. He does not exactly like it, but then Davos is so much more lively than Timbuctoo is likely to be. Besides, he remembers meeting last year two or three people who told him they intended to be among the Alps for the ensuing winter.

But no one—least of all our friend himself—can say how long he will stay in any one spot. A degree more of frost than would be enough to make a robust man grumble and yearn for a warmer air, may suddenly set him on the move again. Blue skies and snow become monotonous

in time, and he pines for an honest fog of the Strand for a change. It may be, however, that he has got his heart into difficulties, in this remote nook of Switzerland—or some one else's heart. Flight is not an heroic remedy for a complaint of this kind; but it is the only one for a man who is determined to view matrimony as an experience that would be sure to disagree very much with him. Our girls at home have acquired a character for their matchless self-possession and unwillingness to do aught that shall disturb the sacred calm of their countenances. One is disposed to think that they do not quite merit their reputation in this respect. Be that as it may, in a foreign health-resort many of them put off this chilling armour of self-protection against the wiles of mankind. A flirtation in an hotel is not half so wicked as a flirtation at home. The gentle coquetry of soul with soul is indeed one of the conventional solaces of a health-resort, and you will find that the accomplished invalid of a few years' standing is not to be snared by a mere glance, be the eyes which are its medium ever so bewitching.

There is often a certain spirit of recklessness abroad among a coterie of invalids which has a tendency to give rise to dramatic incidents. It seems to be of the kind hinted at in the words, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." It had its parallel in the reign of King Guillotine during the French Revolution. The doctors of the place may shake their heads with a sense of the gravity of the physical condition of their patients; but even that portentous sign will not recall the reason of these particular invalids. They know or believe that their days are numbered. They have already had enough and to spare of prudence and precautions. The joy of a brief spell of unrestraint and challenge to the enemy to do its worst is too alluring. Hence proceed divers tragic events for the profit of the newspapers. Every occasional visitor to any famous health-resort can recollect two or three such incidents. It is grim work tilting with the inevitable; and it is hard not to sympathise in part with these victims of circumstance, impulse, and the tedium of curative routine.

This is by way of a parenthesis. Our friend, who may be called the hero of this paper, is not likely to hasten his end so suicidally. Quite the contrary. If he finds that his heart is really touched to a

degree that seems to menace his health, upon the whole he may be trusted to perceive that his duty to himself impels him to put a summary end to the danger. It is not that he is so very careful a hedonist, or is as indifferent as Nature herself to the suffering of individuals—other than himself—so long as the type—that is, himself—is kept whole and sound. He would of course rather do a fellow creature a good turn than an ill turn. But habit has made him so regardful of himself, that he can hardly look at things from any standpoint except his own. It is not wilful cruelty on his part if, because his temperature has suddenly become abnormal, or his heart beats in an annoyingly erratic way, he abruptly says "Good-bye" to the lady whose affections he has won wittingly or unwittingly. The common instincts of his nature bid him depart at all costs—in self-preservation; and he does so. It is to be hoped, moreover, that he believes others are as worldly-wise as himself. The lady of his heart, being an invalid, will, doubtless, thank him for removing himself from her society ere she also be made to suffer by the excitement of their intercourse.

The travelling invalid seems to be under the protection of a special Providence. He comes unscathed out of the most manifest perils. With a faith that would do credit to an innocent child, he places himself in the hands of twenty doctors in as many weeks, and is yet no worse at the end of the twenty weeks than he was at the beginning. How does he manage it? one is prone to ask. For my part, I believe he finds his entertainment in comparing the prescriptions of one doctor with those of another. He accepts very varied medicines, but he does not take them. The advice of different kinds, which he receives in like manner, he treats with the like contempt.

Certainly the different injunctions of his different medical advisers are enough to make him smile at the mere sight of a medicine bottle.

The Herr Physician-in-Chief at Mudbad thinks almost any malady may be cured if the patient only be made to perspire sufficiently.

In the Swiss highlands, on the other hand, our friend is expected to get as fat as he can, and to become as tawny as a gipsy.

No self-respecting microbe, it is said, will tolerate Davos for more than two years.

Unless, therefore, our friend is really very ill, and if he is still fairly strong, the Swiss mountains will put him to rights. As a matter of fact, however, he knows more than the doctors. He does not stay two years in Davos because he is tired to death of the place in two months, and because, too, he knows well he will live quite as long elsewhere. Moreover, he rather likes shocking the faculty, if only to give them a lesson in humility.

Of course he disregards completely the more general counsel of his advisers. He is told by one doctor to sleep with his window open and lightly covered; by another with his window shut, and under several blankets; a third will not let him leave the house in the morning until an hour before noon; a fourth tells him to get up early, and take a walk before breakfast. And one and all attempt to physic him with medicines of price. It is an odd business. They cannot be blamed. Neither can he.

The ordinary traveller is constantly meeting the professional invalid where he would least expect to find him: upon the tops of mountains, in the teeth of icy blasts; in suffocating billiard-rooms, at midnight; at prize fights, in cellars and other out-of-the-way places; seated at the green tables of Monte Carlo; or in the slums of Naples, where, it is thought, one may catch a fever as easy as breathing. The ordinary traveller's tour is cut short as often as not by a typhus or blood-poisoning; and it is then as much as he can do to pull himself together for a long spell of convalescence. But his acquaintance, the invalid, jogs light-heartedly from risk to risk, sipping one pleasure after another until he is surfeited, and all without appreciable discomfort. He does not brag about his happiness, or his immunity from contagious diseases. He takes the gifts that Heaven tenders to him, and allows his thanks to be understood. He is at one with the character in "Wilhelm Meister," who says there is nothing more insufferable than to hear people reckoning up the pleasures they enjoy. The fable of Polycrates and the ring is an obvious check upon self-congratulations of any kind.

When a man turns round to his friend at Monte Carlo with the words, "Am I not lucky?" the chances are that he puts a sudden period to what he calls his good luck. The man who tells his young wife over and over again that he is the happiest

fellow in the world, may end by inciting her to enquire of herself if her own happiness is of so surpassing a nature.

If the professional invalid were a man of literary tastes, he could write some very fine novels about his adventures. Of course these are not of a very sensational kind. He makes no pretence of going about the world like a knight errant of old, simply and solely to rescue beauty, innocence, or helplessness from the perils with which it may be encompassed ; nor does he venture out of his depths into the wilds of any country in pursuit of big game, scientific objects, or undiscovered territory. Oh, dear, no. He always keeps one foot fast in civilisation, if not both. Yet even thus, entertainment of the romantic kind seems to rejoice to place itself at his disposal.

It is said that all things come to the man who waits. Like other sayings, this is not quite true ; but assuming that it is, methinks the man who is indifferent is in the like agreeable case. Our friend does his best to be impassive wherever and in whatever circumstances he chances to be. It would be due to no fault of his own if he showed surprise or interest even were a star to descend from the firmament, and embed itself in the ground before his eyes by one of its points. His " how do you do ? " to an acquaintance upon whom he haps in a Nile island above the second cataract differs but infinitesimally in tone from his " how do you do ? " in Piccadilly. Time and space seem to be annihilated for his convenience, and he does not regard the concession as anything out of the common. When his winter's pilgrimage is at an end, he returns to England, and resumes the pleasures of the summer as if nothing of consequence had occurred since he last touched a tennis-racket a year ago. Really, indeed, that is the fact—as far as he is concerned. Though he may have been in the thick of a European revolution, or on a battle-field or two after or during the engagement, these things are of no consequence to him once the momentary thrill of interest which they aroused has dissipated into nothingness. The impression they leave upon him is less strong than that which the mere reading of the record of them sets upon the mind of the ordinary intelligent man.

Upon the whole, is it not clear that our poor friend, in this constant search for the new and the agreeable in life, does himself much wrong ? He trains himself to be a spectator only in the midst of the game

and pageant of life. But he is not even a spectator of the first rank. He does not care how the battle goes. He does not try to pass on to others the emotions which proceed from his experience of the varied scenes in the drama of the world. He tests them on his own small tongue for a moment or two, and that is all. His sympathies wither and wither until it is as if he had none left. In seeking to escape even the most trivial of bodily inconveniences, he makes himself an alien to common sensibility. Men and women pass before him, and are no concern of his. If one man kills another before his eyes, well, it is a man less in the world, and no concern of his. It may even be that a woman or a child shall be in danger of drowning in his presence ere he realises that they are living mortals like himself, and that by moving hand and foot on their behalf he may save them from the death that immediately threatens them.

Perhaps there is a little fancy in this picture ; but if so, it is only a little. You see, too, that I am assuming our friend is not really the invalid it suits his convenience to appear to be. He is not a Hercules ; with this qualification he might else readily pass muster among the majority of men. Having once acquired standing as an invalid, however, he is loth to resign the advantages which such brevet rank confers upon him. He would do well enough at home if he cared to throw in his lot with the rest of us. But this does not suit his humour.

Indeed, if his aim be to prolong his life, he may, as a rule, congratulate himself upon his success. Somehow or other, though the Insurance companies have all looked askance at him, and civilly declined his advances, he lives to laugh at them. His annual peregrinations seem to serve as an inoculation against mortal diseases. When first he began them—with a timid fear lest he should die at once of foreign life and cooking—his stomach was sensitive, and resentful of strange dishes. But, as time goes by, it craves these alien foods regularly when the days begin to shorten fast. They seem to give him new vigour. He no longer knows the meaning of the word dyspepsia. He can bear protracted journeys as well as the man of irreproachable physical repute.

It is so to the end. Our excellent friend at sixty is still young in comparison with his hale and hearty contemporaries who

have never taken heed to nurse their health. At seventy he continues his customary migrations south with the first autumnal frost in the home-land ; indeed, his vagabond habits have become so fast riveted upon him, that only by the greatest efforts can he shake himself free of them. At seventy-five or eighty he is summoned to the bedside of his brother, who, in spite of his robust health, has been caught tripping by the enemy. Him he attends to his last, long home ; nor does he take cold in the churchyard like the rest of the mourners. Perhaps at eighty-one or eighty-two our friend begins to feel premonitions that he is approaching the period when the grasshopper is a burden, and one's legs seek to go different ways at the same time. But he is not disheartened. He is assured that he has still a fund of reserve strength upon which he can draw in case of need. This being so, he is less distressed than his many nephews and nieces appear to be when, at eighty-five, he is smitten by paralysis. It is a gentle stroke, as such calamities go ; but it confines him to the house for a considerable while. He is a real invalid for perhaps the first time in his life. In his ninetieth year he makes his will—as much because it is customary so to do when one is in the autumn of one's years, as for any other reason. And it is only when he is nearer a hundred than ninety-five that he falls peacefully asleep for the last time, and terminates his career. If his heirs have a discreet and not irreverent sense of humour, they may very fitly inscribe upon his tombstone the words :

"He lived and died an invalid."

IN REAR OF THE ARMY.

WITH all our experience of "little wars," with all the brilliant picturing of modern fights from the graphic pens of "our special correspondents," how little really, of all that is done during a campaign, comes to the knowledge of the good folks at home ! Much that is dramatic and striking is brought before them, but much that is essential is of necessity ignored.

War is declared ! Up goes the curtain. Alarums and excursions ! Enter army and an admiring crowd (right) ; cheers and waving banners ; twice round and then off (left). Edwin lingers to tell in broken accents his devotion to his Queen and to

his Angelina. Exit to help the army to protect them. Band—"The Girl I Left Behind Me"—getting fainter in the distance ; Angelina faints altogether. Curtain—only to rise again on a camp scene in Africa, some hundreds of miles up country. Edwin doing "sentry-go"—and so on, and so on, and so on.

We follow all the action, whether on the stage or in the press, and are satisfied ; but, after all, there is much behind of which we hear nothing, of which we know nothing, and knowing nothing care nothing. All the large army of workers behind the scenes—the stage-carpenters, the scene-shifters, the lime-light men, the stage-manager above all—whose constant, earnest, well-drilled efforts are as needed for success as Edwin's own. What do we know of them ? One figure stands there solemn and still in the moonlight ; around are grouped the slumbering forms of the soldiers ; long lines of tents stand silently suggestive of a mighty host ; a camp fire flickers (up stage R). A lovely picture, and Edwin the central figure of it all. The house is awe-struck for awhile, and then comes round after round of delighted applause. But, oh ! if the lime-light man would let his moon go out ; oh ! if the curtain would but go up one minute earlier, and show the retreating legs of the manager ; oh ! that all would go wrong for a moment, just to show how easy it is to go wrong ! But no, the army of workers behind have done their work too well, and Edwin, the central figure, receives the plaudits of the tight-packed house.

My object now is to tell a few of the thousand essentials in real warfare, which correspond to the duties of this unseen band of workers. How true it is that, unless "things go wrong," nothing, or next to nothing, is known or thought of them ; and yet it is as true as any other of the fixed principles of war, that unless the arrangements in rear of the army are minutely accurate, that army is bound hand and foot—it cannot fight, it cannot march, it cannot live.

The main requirements of an army in the field, beyond its own discipline, courage, and endurance, may be thus summed up :

"Secure the comfort of my men ; give them their daily food ; give them ammunition at once to refill their empty pouches ; take away and care for my sick and wounded ; be near me all the while with both hands full, that I may take from them all I need ; remove all encumbrances that

I do not want, prisoners and spoils of war ; safeguard my baggage ; supply me with reinforcements ; guard my rear that no one may hinder you while doing this, and I ask no more."

Let us see what it amounts to. Space will not admit of detail, nor of considering many of the points. Let us take one only, "Give them their daily food." Many of the conditions are identical for other points. Let us a little elaborate this one.

Edwin was on "sentry-go" some hundred miles up country in Africa, when last we saw him ; how did he get there ? And now did he get his dinner to-day ? He is a particular man like all his comrades, he needs his bread and his beef—and small blame to him, he has to work hard for them—his tea, sugar, salt, and little "extras" ; and though it is the fashion to chaff about "bully" beef and army rations generally, it is Edwin's cookery, and not the victuals, that should mostly bear the blame.

Well, when Edwin landed on the coast, he saw around him a fleet of transports bearing troops, and a fleet of store-ships bearing stores—stores of all kinds, tents, ropes, harness, tools, tinned-meats, biscuits, clothing, medicines, arms, ammunition, whole arsenals of stores—and he saw them hour after hour being landed as mountains on the sea-shore. All seemed chaos, but everything is clearly marked ; every crate, bale, case, box, or barrel can be identified, and gradually order reigns ; magazines and store-houses rise, and the mountains become little scattered hills, accessible and handy. Now is the time for workers. Everything is wanted at once by the troops ; and for everything issued to them the public will want an account and a printed receipt. There is the office (?) and the work in it must be as good as though it were the every-day work of the few officers and soldier-clerks, bred to peace routine, who have to do it. How easy it would be if only the troops weren't here, and there were a fortnight to get ready in ! But the troops are there ; until they were, the stores would not be safe—unless the stores were there the troops would starve ; the stores exist for the troops and the troops must have them at once, and as methodically as at Aldershot, or somebody will be hauled over the coals for a lost bayonet, or an unaccounted for pound of biscuit, some two years hence. Customers are many, and time is short.

There are thirty thousand of Edwin's

brothers in the field, and ten thousand horses. To provision them for three months—and a less supply would fetter the movement of the army—will need roughly some eleven thousand tons of food and forage. Imagine it all collected, landed and stored. The army is at the port or near it. All it has to do is to send a short distance for its food. True, but the army is not going to stay there. It is going forward to do its work ; how are these supplies to follow it ? What does the army do ?

Each fraction of the army is so organised in war, that, wherever it goes, it bears with it rations for three days ; so that, if the worst comes to the worst, it can subsist for that time without help. Each man carries on his person food for one day, a tinned ration, with instructions to use it on emergency only, and never without an order. Food for two more days is carried with him in waggons detailed for this duty only ; each regiment or unit having its own waggons, driven by its own men, which march and encamp with the troops ; these waggons we will call the Regimental Transport, though it is part only of all that is known by that name.

All being ready, the army leaves its "base," and marches, say, fifteen miles towards the enemy. The "base" is the port where all it wants is stored. The next day it marches another fifteen miles, and so on ; and it becomes apparent that further means are needful to send on the food, for of what use would be ten million tons of food at the base, unless the soldier could get his dinner served him at the front ? It is easy enough to land the food ; it is very difficult to distribute it. Let us see the process. The troops have done their march, and have reached the spot selected for their camp ; fatigue parties are told off—some to cut wood, some to dig kitchens, to carry water, to make shelters, to draw rations, etc. The quarter-master has taken this last party to the regimental waggons, and drawn thence the rations for the day, conveyed them to the kitchens, parcelled them out to company cooks, who cut them into squad messes, and each man gets his dinner. The emptied waggons, however, must replenish from somewhere, or a repetition of the process would see the end of the rations. In the meanwhile, the Army Service Corps column attached to each brigade, has been moving up some distance in rear. These waggons—called the supply column—have brought up one

more day's supply, by which are refilled the emptied regimental waggons. This empties the supply column, which, in turn, must replenish from somewhere. How? To realise it best, let us imagine the army is some sixty miles from its base, and picture to ourselves the work that is being done upon the road in rear.

Along this road are two long streams of traffic; one to the army, of full waggons—remember, we are here neglecting all but food—and one from the army, of empty ones.

The road is divided into easy stages, and on each length a certain number of men and horses work. The first batch leave the base, and draw their loaded waggons to the next station, leave them there, and return with empty ones brought down from the front; the next batch, who have brought down empty ones, now take these loaded waggons and draw them another stage, meet other empty waggons there and return with them; and so a system of relays is worked along the entire road, and each man returns at night to his own camp, while the horses have their heavy and their light work alternately.

By these relays a larger amount of food is brought up the line than is immediately wanted, and some fifty miles from the base an advanced magazine is formed, which becomes a secondary base for the army, and relays work thence as before. One short march from the army, wherever it may be, is the "advanced dépôt," as it is called, being the head of all the moving stream in rear; and it is the business of those in charge to see that all is there that can be wanted. From this advanced dépôt the supply columns—emptied, as we saw just now—reload, and move up to be once more utilised. And so the work goes on.

It sounds so easy as described; but great care, forethought, and power of organisation are needed to keep the many links of this living chain in order. Largely composed of the native element, officers, men, and animals—all strangers to each other, all has to be thrown into shape after war has been declared. Counted in war by thousands, the numbers maintained in peace are few; and the provision of the required numbers, and their organisation for ready action at short notice, is not the least of the many cares that fall to the lot of those responsible for these "workers behind the scenes."

THE SURREY SIDE.

"Now for Surrey side and railways," would be the cry as the busy little steamer from London Bridge Stairs came alongside the pier at Paul's Wharf. The railways are still there—noticeably there; they have made the Surrey side their own, as it were; but it is no longer of necessity that we cross the river to reach them. The mountain has obligingly crossed the river to Mohammed; and that great London Bridge Station—which was once the great point of departure and arrival for Continental traffic, and engrossed all the traffic with the South of England—has now somewhat fallen from its high estate.

But the Surrey side has an existence apart from railways. It has even a claim to be considered the real original London, which, as every schoolboy may be supposed to know, was placed by that eminent geographer, Ptolemy, on the south side of the Thames. For centuries, Southwark possessed a certain municipal organisation of its own, and, although its powerful, overpowering neighbour over the way eventually sat upon it and crushed the life out of it, and treated it as a conquered and subject community, yet it has always preserved, somewhat carefully hidden, a spark of its ancient fires.

But, as well as Southwark, there is Lambeth, which has a good deal to say as to the Surrey side; and Bermondsey, the land of leather, lower down; and neither of these great parishes is much visited by travellers, except those of a commercial line. The great lines of thoroughfare from the various bridges pass through the district without assimilating the network of small streets and crooked lanes that lie between; great railway dépôts have cut asunder populous neighbourhoods and passed the sponge over their local traditions. Factories, timber-yards, breweries, flour-mills, black chimneys, and tall shot-towers occupy the whole foreshore of the river between Westminster Bridge and Blackfriars; and a district which, from its salient position on the river and from its unrivalled conveniences as a centre of traffic might be the pride and glory of London, is given up to be a kind of dust-hole and rubbish heap for its more wealthy and powerful neighbours.

If we make our way to the Surrey side, over Westminster Bridge, we come at once to what is, perhaps, the pleasantest part of

the whole range of shore : the river terrace which stretches from Westminster Bridge to Lambeth Palace, with the clustered buildings of Saint Thomas's Hospital aligned upon it. It is a pleasant walk, and always a quiet one, towards Lambeth, with the grandiose towers of the Palace of Parliament, its trim terraces and innumerable windows frosted round with traceries, looking down upon us. Close at hand we may see, through the railings, the lawns and gravel-paths of the pleasure-ground of the hospital, where, if it be a warm, sunny day, patients may be seen taking in reviving draughts of the outside air. Beyond, there rises the dead-house, and a stretch of frosted windows signifies the dissecting-room, where poor mortality yields up its last secrets to the students' indifferent glance.

It is probable that this hospital of Saint Thomas may claim to rank as one of the earliest, and certainly the chiefest, of all the great hospitals of England. Its presence there upon the Albert Embankment is more or less of an accident. Originally, as everybody knows, it stood within a stone's throw of London Bridge, and formed a street of itself, Saint Thomas's Street, while just opposite was the hospital known as "Guy's," long famous for its medical schools. Originally the hospital of Saint Thomas was founded A.D. 1213, by Richard, Prior of Bermondsey, and dedicated to the famous English Saint, Thomas A'Beckett. The brethren of Saint Thomas were charged with the care of the sick poor of the neighbourhood, and when their house was closed, at the general dissolution of religious houses, forty beds it was found had been constantly provided for poor, infirm persons. If any provision were then made for carrying out the benevolent objects of the foundation, they have escaped notice. It was sixteen years after, during the reign of Edward the Sixth, that the City Corporation entered into possession of the hospital, under a gift from the Crown, and fitted it up once more for its original purpose.

There the hospital remained for more than three centuries, renewed and enlarged from time to time. And then the South-Eastern Railway acquired the site for the extension of the London Bridge terminus, and the magnificent price obtained by the hospital authorities enabled them to build this handsome series of structures, in which the several wards occupy separate buildings, and are, as far as possible, isolated from

their surroundings. But to gain an idea of the work that the hospital is doing, one should seek the front to the Lambeth Palace Road, and the entrance for outpatients. And there, at the regulation hour, may be seen a great throng of people, all provided with bottles for their medicine. Busy, anxious women, who take their visit to the hospital as part of the day's work ; slatternly old dames ; children wide awake and precocious ; girls in service, carrying the door-key as an emblem of office ; pale sempstresses, and sallow work-girls ; all these form a crowd that has its cheerful elements, and seems moved by a spirit of camaraderie and good humour. The men are more gloomy and silent, they do not bear affliction so patiently, nor have they the same assuagement in talking over their ills.

Leaving the hospital, our way is towards the Palace ; and here, in a neighbourhood somewhat gloomy and dingy, appears an inscription that arrests attention, "Paris Street." Why, this is the old Paris Garden ! The name takes us back to the days of Shakespeare—aye, and earlier than those—even to the days of the Canterbury Pilgrims, and of Gower and the "Lover's Confession." For we first hear of the name in the reign of Richard the Second, when the Manor House was tenanted by one Robert de Paris. And there is extant an ordinance of the King directing the butchers of the city to bring thither their offal, to be consumed by the King's bears.

Now, who was this Robert de Paris living in this gloomy hold, close to the King's bear-pits, apart from every one, and yet within call of the Royal Palace ? A horn blown on one of the towers of the Palace would be warning enough for Monsieur de Paris.

There we have the man, clearly enough. Robert de Paris is the King's executioner—an office of gloomy dignity not to be confounded with that of the common hangman of later days. And it is with these sinister associations that the history of Paris Garden begins. Then there were two baiting-grounds—rude, circular structures, fitted up with seats supported on rough scaffolding. "Those who go to Paris Garden, first pay one penny at the gate, another at the entrie of the scaffold, and a third for quiet standing." In Elizabeth's time, 1559, the French Ambassadors are, with much ceremony, conducted by water to Paris Garden to see the baiting

of bulls and bears. The popularity of this wretched sport is shown by an accident that happened in 1582, when the over-crowded scaffolding, contrived to hold a thousand spectators, gave way with a crash, and many were killed or wounded. It was on a Sunday, too, and afforded a text to many zealous preachers. The rude structures adapted for bear-baiting might without difficulty be made to do duty for playhouses; and in 1613, the year when the "Globe"—Shakespeare's house on Bank-side—was burnt down, we find Henalowe, who had the "Fortune" in Cripplegate, opening a summer theatre at Paris Garden.

The old Manor House of Paris Garden was a sequestered abode surrounded by a moat, and encompassed by a labyrinth of ditches, where might be found the rare hedgehog grass, as mentioned by Gerard in his *Herbal*. The house was well-known to the gallants of Charles the First's reign as Holland's leaguer, and is not seldom alluded to by the dramatists and playwrights of the period. It was a place of very doubtful reputation, as, indeed, was all the district of Lambeth Marsh. The near neighbourhood of the Archbishop had no effect upon the morals of the locality.

Then as now the meads and gardens of the Archbishop's palace formed an agreeable feature of the landscape, and the sombre Lollards' Tower, and Morton's handsome gateway of red brick, give distinction to the corner where Lambeth church stands under the wing of the Palace, in pleasant countrified dignity. Just beyond the jingling tram-cars are running, and from the comparative seclusion of the Embankment, and the precincts of the Palace, we pass into the full tide of life.

But let us rather retrace our steps, and begin again at the foot of Westminster Bridge, where there are more tram-cars ready to take us to Clapham, Stockwell, Brixton, Deptford, Greenwich, along the noisy, bustling Westminster Bridge Road. Here, in the very forefront of the panorama, comes Astley's, recalling vague associations of circus processions, triumphal displays, the humours of Mr. Merryman, and of an atmosphere redolent of the perfumes of saw-dust and orange-peel.

Such displays were in their infancy when Philip Astley, a light dragoon who had recently taken his discharge, having served in the wars of the Great Frederick,

and won the good opinion of his officers, set up a riding-school close by the foot of Westminster Bridge. According to tradition Astley found the piece of ground he wanted in the hands of an old man, who had a sort of poultry farm there, and reared pheasants for sale. Of this old man Astley purchased the lease of the ground, and enclosed the space with hoardings—the whole being open to the sky. This was about the year 1768, when equestrian entertainments were provided for the public on a very small scale. At suburban gardens, such as the "Three Hats" at Islington, where there would be a green surrounded by drinking boxes and summer-houses, circus riders could exhibit their feats, sending round the hat in the usual way after each performance. Astley himself began in this way in a field not far from the scene of his subsequent triumphs known as Glover's Halfpenny Hatch.

The beginning of Astley's fortunes was in a present from the commander of his old regiment of a charger, known afterwards as the Spanish horse, to which Astley had already taught a number of tricks. He would ungirth his saddle, wash his feet in a pail of water, set the tea-things^a, take the kettle off the fire, with other amusing performances, which used to bring down the house—when the house first came into existence.

But it was not till 1780 that Astley managed to get a roof over his structure, the materials for which he obtained by an ingenious device. It had always been the privilege of the mob at each Westminster election to destroy and carry off piecemeal the temporary wooden hustings erected for the nomination. Astley induced a number of his retainers to mingle with the crowd, to take their share in the pillage, and to spread the intelligence among the mob that plenty of beer was waiting on the other side of the bridge for such as should present themselves not altogether empty-handed. The consequence was, that the Westminster hustings found its way almost bodily to Astley's riding-school; and presently a covered amphitheatre of wood, divided into pit, boxes, and gallery, sprang into existence.

This was not altogether a new idea of Astley's. An author of plays, of Charles the First's time, wrote bitterly of

"New amphitheatres to draw the custom from playhouses."

Horses had been introduced on the

stage, certainly in Pepys's time, who notices them, when Shirley's play of "Hyde Park" was revived after the Restoration. But Astley's notion of a mixed dramatic and equestrian spectacle took with the British public, and people began to throng towards the new Amphitheatre of the Arts—as Astley magniloquently named his wooden booth.

Success brought rivalry, and in 1782 was built the Royal Circus in the Blackfriars Bridge Road, which, after a chequered career, is now known as the Surrey Theatre. For the new place Charles Dibdin wrote the pieces, and as no license could be obtained, the concern was carried on without one. This ended in an unseemly contest with the authorities, in the course of which, on one occasion, the theatre was cleared by a troop of soldiers.

But Astley knew how to keep on the right side of authority. In Paris, at this time, he also had a show. The Lieutenant of Police gave him permission for horsemanship, but he was not to be allowed a stage on which to exhibit tumbling and other feats. Astley contrived a moveable stage, supported on the backs of horses, and thus evaded the prohibition, delighting large audiences, and securing a very successful season. The exhibition attracted the attention of Royalty, and young Astley was summoned to perform at Versailles before Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette.

Entirely a figure of the Surrey side is Philip Astley, at his lodgings near the circus, up three pairs of stairs, with Mrs. Connell, a widow, who, as "Mary," is always called into consultation upon important points of management. His dramatic authors, too, are of the Surrey side, such as Mulberry Stump, so named by Astley, as far as his Christian name goes, on account of his jolly red nose, and secondly because he had a wooden leg. Poor Stumpy is often in the Clink prison for debt, and has to be bailed out in order to finish his piece for the coming representation. Then there is Jemmy Decastro, comedian, comic singer, and mimic, who is always on the bills, and who eventually writes his manager's memoirs. Into all about him Astley infuses some of his own active, cheery spirit. "Who's Mr. Impossible?" he cries, when the stage carpenter suggests the word, "he don't live in this house."

Some of Astley's sayings have become immortal. Such as his directions to his

author, "Cut the cackle, and come to the osse." He was a terrible one for cutting and slashing, but with an instinctive eye to effects, to the broad effects of the amphitheatre. As when at a rehearsal he watches keenly a terrific broadsword combat. "This won't do," he cries, "we must have shields." Or when he addresses his musical composer, "Doctor, I want a tune for two broadswords, to-ro, tang-tang," thus indicating the motif of the melody.

A many-sided man, too, was Astley. An excellent performer in the water, he floated on his back, one day, holding a flag in each hand, from Westminster to Blackfriars. He built, too, a great wooden bathing shed by Westminster Bridge, where his patrons might take a header into the river; but this was never much patronised, and went to decay.

When war broke out with France, who but Astley was to the fore, ready to help in the embarkation of horses, and eventually joining his own old regiment as a volunteer? But he was recalled from the tented field by the news that his famous amphitheatre had been burnt down. This was in the autumn of 1794, and by the next Easter Monday a new and greatly improved amphitheatre was opened to enthusiastic crowds. At the entrance to this structure we find our Astley, in the year 1801, bestriding a barbed steed, and himself in full uniform, and surrounded by a brilliant retinue of all his chief performers. The occasion was the celebration of the Peace of Amiens, when the King made his Royal progress on horseback to Westminster. At the King's right hand rode the Duke of York, a great friend of Astley's, who greeted the manager's profound salutes with a friendly wave of the hand.

"Who's that, Fred?" asked the King.
"A veteran of the German War, and a good soldier," replied the Duke.

The King's condescending bow that followed sank deep into the circus-manager's heart.

"Jemmy, my boy, my sovereign did me the honour to bow to me. What do you think of that, my dear boy?"

Always, too, Astley was good to his old comrades of the army. There were seats reserved for soldiers, to which the uniform gave free admittance. Astley, joining his regiment, brings them over five hundred flannel jackets to keep them warm and comfortable, and in one of the corners of each of these jackets was sewn a shilling,

a delicate attention relished more by the bold dragoon, perhaps, than even the jacket itself.

Again, in 1803, just when Bonaparte had denounced the Treaty of Amiens, and laid an embargo on English visitors to France, Astley, who had been staying in Paris, looking after his little bit of property in the Rue Faubourg du Temple, where his circus had been, hears of his circus on the Surrey side as destroyed by fire. Prisons could not hold him after that, and he escaped across the frontier, and reached home to find the news too true; for on the second of September fire had destroyed every vestige of his amphitheatre.

Again, the Easter Monday holiday-keepers gathered uproariously at the opening of a new amphitheatre in the following year. But now it is young John Astley who takes the management, although his father declares that he will always have a horse in the team.

Soon after, through his influence at Court, Astley gets a license from the Lord Chamberlain for an amphitheatre on the other side of the water, and buys from Lord Craven, part of the site of old Craven or Bohemia House, at the foot of Drury Lane. And here he is at work building, during the year 1805-6, and he calls the new theatre, in allusion to the famous games he means to rival, the Olympic Pavilion. But his foot is no longer on the native heather, the famous Surrey side. The Olympic audiences are cold and scanty, and Astley gets out of the speculation by selling the place to Elliston, who migrates there from the old opposition house—the Royal Circus or Surrey Theatre.

But what was wasted in the Strand was reimbursed by the Surrey side. A great success was the 'Siege of Valenciennes,' afeat of arms, the fame of which has been dimmed by time, with real soldiers and real guns, and a charge of cavalry as a realistic episode of the siege. And a real startling Surrey side piece, effectively named the "Blood Red Knight," is said to have cleared eighteen thousand pounds for the lucky managers.

These palmy days long left their memories enshrined in the bosoms, not only of the Surrey-siders, but of all the country districts round about, and a visit to London would be no visit at all without one night at least at "Ashley's" to share in the thrilling scenes of stage and arena.

It was a strange accident that, after his long connection with the Surrey side,

Philip Astley should die in Paris, and be buried in Père Lachaise. His only son, who carried on the show, died in the same room exactly seven years after his father, and the name of Astley came to an end. Then Mr. Davis took the command. But from that time, with very short intervals, Astley's has always had something going on in the way of "osse."

For the rest the Westminster Bridge Road is not without interest in the living, moving panoramas it presents, say from the top of a tram-car. The shops are always interesting with their devices to attract attention, and where from structural arrangements the shops are small and almost crowded out of the line, their efforts to assert themselves are attended with some degree of originality. There was one who wrote himself "Historic sign-writer to her Majesty." But dark, sombre, and cold are the narrow side-streets, where footsteps are rare, and a dull silence seems to reign. The main thoroughfare is crowded enough, stolid carters with waggons loaded with country produce block the way, and turn a deaf ear to the whistle of the tram-car driver. Omnibuses and cabs thread their way among the broad-wheeled waggons. A funeral checks the traffic for awhile, and on the side walk a man who has undertaken to walk from Croydon to Westminster Bridge, with a pot of fourpenny ale on his head, neither spilling nor sipping the same on the way, is received with cheers on the approaching completion of his task by a select knot of admirers.

But at night—let us visit this road at night, not by the pale moonlight, but in the foggy gloom of a bitter cold Christmas eve. The main road is quiet enough; people seem benumbed by the cold; the gas-lights burn dim, and the fog has crept into the shop windows and turned their brilliance into a yellow, sickly glow. Cold now and dreary to the very marrow-bones are the narrow, short streets that lead into the labyrinth of poor, mean tenements on either hand. But a sharp turn to the left brings us into a different scene. The street is called the Marsh, and it leads directly into the New Cut; and the footway on one side of the street passes between an avenue formed by the shops, mostly with open fronts, like booths, and the stalls, and sheds, and barrows of innumerable small traders. All along, the footway is crowded with a mass of people moving, without any order, in

opposite directions. Shopkeepers and stall-keepers vie with each other in cries that would be loud if they could, but which often end in a hoarse, croaking whisper. Here you may be weighed, like a jockey, with a ponderous beam and swinging gear, such as they use at Epsom and Goodwood—an appeal to the imagination of youth, which does not seem to boast any great success.

Then there is a barrow-load of snips, and fragments, and odds and ends of ribbons, with bits of lace, and fragments of dress materials; and next to this is a green-grocer's stall, loaded with cabbages, all thickly crusted over with ice and snow. Buy, buy, buy! shout all the frantic traders; but that is just what people don't do. Here and there may be a woman who has a purse with a little silver in it, who is ordering in her Christmas cheer most bountifully; but people in general confess themselves to be without money, and seem to find a melancholy kind of pleasure in proclaiming the fact. Yet there are temptations well within the reach of a humble purse. What do you say to green peas—hot green peas on Christmas Eve in the New Cut, served out in little saucers, all hot and only a penny?

"Come along, people!" This is the fierce, almost despairing cry of a stout, ruddy young fellow who sells potatoes, and who seems to resent the inattention of the crowd as a personal affront. The butchers are the most vociferous of the traders, but the grocers and cheesemongers run them hard for first place. The greengrocers rely more on persuasion, put on their most engaging manners and mellifluous tones. "Now, my dears, now, my sweets." One old dame is especially choice and honeyed in her epithets as she sees a possible customer approaching. "Come and buy, my lovely sweet, my precious dear, my dove-ey duck"; and then, as hope fades away, the tone changes to, "Git along with you then, old Sally Brown."

As for the number of things you may get for a penny in the New Cut on a Christmas Eve, it can only be said that it includes all kinds of penny toys for the children, penny cooking utensils for the kitchen—in anticipation of the Christmas banquet, penny knives and forks for the friends who come to share the feast, penny pegs for their hats and coats, and penny mugs wherein to draw the creaming Christmas ale. Then there are bonnets and hats of sorts, all piled up pell-mell in

a cart, and some of these can be picked out for a penny, although others may run to quite high prices, and with flowers and velvet adornments often coming to as much as a shilling.

While all this hubbub and confusion is going on by the flaming lights of cressets and naphtha lamps, with hasty banquets of winkle at the corners of streets—those dim, gloomy, icy-cold streets that lead into the unknown—with occasional orgies of hot drinks in the way of cordials of promising, high-sounding names and brilliant colouring, the rest of the world seems to have gone home quietly to its own fireside. For this half-mile of market or fair, unchartered and unprivileged, comes to an end suddenly in the Blackfriars Road, which is black and dull enough, with the coloured lights of the tram-cars sailing to and fro in the darkness like ships at sea. And that way the river is soon crossed, where flocks of ice innumerable are coming up with the tide, softly crackling as they strike each other or jostle against the piers of the bridge. And, as the City churches are beginning to sound forth their Christmas chime, we take our leave for the night of the Surrey side.

THE TREVERTON MARRIAGE.

A SHORT SERIAL STORY.

CHAPTER XV.

How things would have gone at Oswaldburn Chase after that ill-starred day in Coaliquay, it is impossible to say, had not Fate, or Providence, intervened in the shape of a succession of so-called chances to put off the moment of reckoning. There was Colonel Blake first; it was impossible for Sir Everard to "have it out" with his wife in the railway carriage when the old fellow was chattering there, first on politics with Sir Everard, then discussing fashion and society with her ladyship.

"Not been to the opera!" he exclaimed, "no more have I, I must confess; but it is not expected of an old fellow like me. Now Treverton here is a young man, a newly married man; you are the very people the opera and the drama expect for patrons."

With Sir Everard sitting in his corner with such a tremendous frown upon his

face, it was hardly to be wondered at that Beatrix should answer, somewhat nervously :

" It is too far off for us. I hear it has been a success. Have you heard anything more of it ? "

The anxious eyes with which she asked the last question stabbed Sir Everard through. He could hardly refrain himself from seizing her like any Whitechapel ruffian, and shaking confession out of her.

" Nothing, except that the prima donna is only fit for comedy opera, and that the lady, who styles herself Princess something or other, can neither sing nor act ; but that the tenor is good enough."

Sir Everard was obliged to lean out of the window with some muttered excuse about the scenery. Nothing was visible but the lights here and there ; but nobody noticed details and inconsistencies. Neither did Sir Everard and Beatrix in their pre-occupation notice how Colonel Blake kept his talk flowing on general subjects ; how he never asked after Helena and her wedding, though he and she had been great friends since her babyhood.

" At least you saw the picture at Fisher's," he proceeded. " Holman Hunt's—I forgot the name—I always forget names. Curious idea, is it not ? "

" I am ashamed to say I never thought of the picture. One never has time for pictures, running up for a day's shopping ; especially in these short days."

" They have electric light for it. But ladies never do seem to find time for anything but shopping. Speaking of shopping, have you heard the last about the Kenyons ? Mrs. Kenyon has a perfect craze for shopping ; she buys all manner of expensive, useless things. She has nearly ruined the Dean. They do say he put a notice in the papers to say he would not be answerable for her debts ; but that is not true. Great people like Deans do not condescend to make public scandals. They wash their dirty linen at home. He is a very proud man. It would simply kill him if he knew even that his wife's debts were matters of public discussion and amusement. Fancy laughing over five o'clock tea about a Dean's wife ! It makes one's hair stand on end. They really had a joke about it in a burlesque last week at Coaliquay. Such is the penalty of greatness ; ' of sinning on such heights.' "

The careless words were a revelation to Sir Everard. The enforced abstention from speaking on the subject nearest his

heart had given him time to recover from the shock, at least, sufficiently to consider. He had never thought of what the social consequences would have been had he followed his first impulse and made away with himself ; if not under a train, at least, in one ! He had never thought how a scandal on the stately heights of his position in the county would have become the property of every gossiping man or woman, ill-natured or good-natured. The latter would be the worst. He writhed at the idea of his most private affairs being discussed at all ; but to be pitied, or laughed at, or accused—oh ! that way madness lay, only to imagine it.

Could he then condone such an offence ?

Certainly not ; but the offence and its rebuke and punishment must be kept between himself and his wife. He must wash his dirty linen at home.

At Monkchester Station the Chase post-bag was put into the carriage, as was the custom when the carriage was in the town so late ; the last train by the small branch line from Monkchester past Oswaldburn having gone two hours since, too early for the London letters. This more than provided an excuse for silence. Sir Everard was intensely anxious to hear from his lawyers. The reading-lamp in the brougham was strong and steady, the springs perfect, the road good. He opened the bag. It contained a number of newspapers, which he replaced, several letters, one of them from Mr. Key ; one addressed to Lady Treverton, returned through the Dead Letter Office ; one from a lady, bearing a coronet and " Carlaurie Castle " on the flap, which he put back into the bag with the remaining missives. Lady Carlaurie would always keep.

Beatrix opened her letter, and gave vent to a sharp exclamation of annoyance. It was the letter written a week ago to Mr. Edward Watson, at the office of the " Coaliquay Express."

Sir Everard did not hear, hardly saw the letter he had handed to her. Mr. Key's letter provided him with ample food for meditation. The newspapers were full of most unpleasant paragraphs ; he sent copies of each of them to Sir Everard. Miss Treverton seemed to be quiet at present. He advised Sir Everard to wait a week before taking any steps. So far, there seemed nothing to fight against but mere gossip. If, in a few days' time, something more definite should transpire, it might be necessary to proceed against the

papers. The insinuations could hardly come from or through Miss Treverton, since she was the last person likely to want to rake up the Emily Stort affair; yet though one paper pointed more directly at Lady Treverton, he had heard, on good authority, that the other lawyers were on the supposed scent of an Emily Stort marriage, presumed to have taken place abroad after Lady Augusta's death.

"My girl! my girl!" groaned Sir Everard, in spirit. "How are we to stop her? To tell her the truth is impossible; it would kill her—or worse, it would estrange her from me for ever; and with perfect justice, for I have done her a terrible wrong. Heaven knows, I did it unwittingly, but it will come none the less heavily on her."

The drive was soon over, and he went straight to the library.

"I must make a clean breast of it to old Key," he told himself. "He will pull us through if any one can."

He wrote a very long letter; lengthy as to detail, lengthier in self-excuse and self-blame, lengthiest in prayers for assistance and demands for a favourable opinion. He told Mr. Key the story Mr. Cullingworth had told Helena that very day; adding the information that he had never suspected for a moment that Emily Stort had not been drowned in the wreck of the "Janet" until the month of August, 1870, five years after Lady Augusta's death, when he had had a few penitent lines of farewell from her, written from her deathbed in Nebraska. There was a postscript to the letter, added by a friend who had nursed her, saying that three days after the writing of the letter, Emily Stort, whom she had known as Mrs. Farish, had died, and was buried beside her supposed husband, Jacob Farish, in the new cemetery of Dodgsonville, Nebraska.

Sir Everard had kept the letter carefully locked away. It was, he believed, the one piece of existing evidence that would displace Helena from her position; but it was also evidence that no farther mistake could be made—that his first and lawful wife really was dead before his latest marriage. He sent it now to Mr. Key, piteously, helplessly, hopelessly asking for advice.

The first dressing-bell rang. In spite of shuddering reluctance to face so much as the servants, who must have heard or read something of these reports, much less to face Beatrix, who had piled misery, if not

dishonour, in doubled measure upon his stricken head, he must obey the summons and go to dine as if nothing were happening. All that lay in his power now was to give the lie to these disgraceful rumours by looking as if nothing were the matter; to act the part of a proud, stately gentleman, unassailable in his lofty distance from the common herd, with its vulgar attraction for mud and filth, its insensate bellowing at those who were not of its own mean kind.

Whatever might be the opinion of the butler and the two footmen who stood and moved about them with sphinx like imperturbability, but who were as keenly observant as angurs watching for signs, Beatrix saw nothing wrong. She was full of her own plans for helping the Princess; she had already looked over her manuscripts, and written some notes for the continuation of her story. She was afraid Sir Everard found her absent-minded. It was so difficult to keep up a conversation before the servants when she felt so conscious of hidden matters, not to be revealed before them, and only to be revealed at a favourable time to Sir Everard.

She went to the drawing-room alone after dinner. Sir Everard said he had work to do in the library, and asked for some tea to be sent to him there. She was not surprised or uneasy; she only thought, "Then I shall have a nice quiet time to myself. Every hour is of importance when the money is so badly wanted."

The first thing he saw on returning to the library was Lady Carlawrie's letter. He opened it. She might tell him something about Helena.

"Dear Everard," he read, "I am so shocked and distressed. Do you know what dreadful things there are in all the papers about your wife? They say she was a married woman when you married her. We always knew there was something bad. It is terrible for poor Helena; and I need not say how keenly we feel the slight cast on Augusta's memory by your rash marriage. These sudden, secret things always turn out like this. I am afraid it will be the end of the Monckchester wedding. Of course the dreadful creature is not with you now—"

There was more, but he hardly read it. Had his wife's name already become inalienably public property? He read the newspaper paragraphs again in this new light. Key's letter had put glasses before

his eyes, coloured by his own guilty conscience, which caused him to see himself, rather than his wife, the possible weak link in the marriage bond.

His wife! He had been jealous, suspicious; he had believed—no, only almost believed, he tried to think—that Montefalco was an old lover whom she did not sufficiently discourage. Discourage! Why, was it not shameful enough that his wife—his wife—might once in her life have allowed such a man to aspire to her, or even to admire her? Was it not beyond all bearing that she should so much as speak to him! And how had he seen her speaking to him! With far more than friendship in her face, with earnest pleading, with lifted, tender eyes, apparently with low, tremulous tones?

Had he not almost gone mad with the suspicion that this old lover might have some hold over her? that perhaps she had once loved him? that some old girl-love, fed by romance, might not have quite died out? But this dreadful thing that Lady Carlaurie said—

Married! Oh, it was impossible! She could not have deceived him with those honest eyes.

Then he remembered, with a shock of agony, that seemed to shake the world away from under his feet, how it was possible to deceive, and be deceived, at once. Had he not himself so deceived Helena's mother? Had she been married to Montefalco, and believed herself a widow until she met him, and he remembered her startled eyes, her shrinking, her fear, that day in the hotel garden at Bigorre?

His brain was sick and dizzy; he dared not look back; he dared not think. Yet he sat there, thinking, and looking back, while the slow night hours marched on. The silence of midnight came to the house. Bolts and bars were in their places; the servants had all gone to bed. He might have sat there all the night through, had he not been startled by a sound—the soft, cautious shutting of the drawing-room door.

Burglars! It was exactly two o'clock, the very time for them! He seized the poker and rushed out of the room, straight upon his terrified wife, who had just reached the staircase.

"Beatrix!"

"Everard! What a fright you gave me!" she gasped.

He did not know what she had seen in

his face; the murderous fury meant for the burglar; the amazement; the maddened suspicion that followed. Her terror seemed the terror of guilt.

"You are late," he cried, roughly. "Where have you been? What have you been doing?"

"You are late too. I have only been in the drawing room. I did not know it was so late."

"You must have been very pleasantly occupied."

Poor girl! She blushed violently. Was it possible he could guess? She stammered:

"I had a book. I am tired and sleepy, and my head aches."

She went slowly upstairs, carrying the candle she had taken from the hall table. He stood watching her; the light flickering on the broad, oak balustrade, on the pictures, on her tall figure in the sweeping black velvet dress, whose lengthy train hung down the stairs behind her, making her seem as weirdly tall as a black shadow. Then he shut himself again into the library.

The consequence of her late work was that she slept until ten next morning. A note was on her dressing-table—an envelope holding a mere scrap of paper.

"Going to London on business, by first train. E. T."

Business! On Sunday? And there had not been a hint of such a thing last night.

She asked her maid when Sir Everard had gone.

"He had a great deal of business to do last night," she said, with a grand assumption of carelessness and knowing all about it, which did not deceive the maid for a moment. "He was going to work very late in the library, but he hoped he need not go up to town until Monday."

She was told that Sir Everard had rung up William the groom at about half-past two; that he had been driven to Coaliquay to catch the 6.30 train to King's Cross.

It was very strange and uncomfortable. Beatrix went to the library to find a Bradshaw. Was there any later train he might catch if he missed the 6.30? Could he possibly catch it in the limited time?

She found there was no other, and that the journey, usually performed in six hours, was lengthened on Sundays to twelve hours and twenty minutes. He could not reach King's Cross until 7.50. It must have been very urgent business

indeed that took him by a Sunday train.

She looked round to find some clue to the reason of such a penitential discipline as twelve hours and a half of incarceration in a train on a cold November day, added to a sleepless night, and a drive that could only be accomplished by the swiftest, strongest horses in three hours. She saw the grate full of grey ashes of paper. Had he been burning the midnight oil over literary work, like herself? On the tiles beneath she found a half-burned envelope. She did not know the writing, but she saw the coronet and "Carlaurie Castle" on the flap.

"It is something about Helena's wedding," she concluded, with a sense of immense relief, only mitigated by fear lest Helena might be making herself a little more unpleasant than usual. "I shall have plenty of time for my story," she thought, delightedly.

She worked hard at it all the week. It occupied her mind so fully that she felt only the very slightest surprise and uneasiness that there should be no news from Sir Everard. It was so nice to have the time all to herself. She had no visitors: but neither was that extraordinary, since everybody had called so recently. On the Friday the novel was finished.

"It must not go in the post-bag," she considered; "somebody would see the address who knew it came from here, and nobody must know until I tell Everard. I will take it to Coaliquay to-morrow; that will be something to do. There is a morning concert with Sarasate. I will go to that, and see the picture at Fisher's."

She went to Coaliquay, posted her parcel, looked at the picture, lunched, and heard Sarasate, all with a delicious sense of stolen pleasure, of truant schoolgirl enjoyment. She went to the station in time to catch a train that would take her to Oswaldburn. The first person she saw on the platform was Sir Everard.

"Good Heavens! What are you doing in this place?" he exclaimed, below his breath.

"I was all alone, so I came to hear Sarasate, and to do other things," she answered, bewildered by his manner, her natural truthfulness impelling her to add the last words.

All his suspicions rushed back upon him. What was old Key's advice; what were the seemingly satisfactory answers to the enquiries they had made during the past week;

what was his slowly gained back confidence compared with the visible fact of her embarrassed manner, of all the secrets and mysteries that hung about her?

This time he managed to secure a private compartment. It was an express train, that did not stop between Coaliquay and Monkchester.

"Beatrix," he said, sternly, as soon as they had started, "what took you to Coaliquay to-day?"

She looked frightened and confused, his eyes were so fierce, fixed upon her with the intensity of a grand inquisitor. She was obliged to stammer:

"I have wanted to tell you before, I ought to have done so; but I was afraid. You have such very old-fashioned ideas about women."

"Old-fashioned!" burst in angry scorn from his lips. "I fear my ideas are old-fashioned! Women no longer wish to be modest, pure, and docile, like their mothers. Old-fashioned! Good Heavens!"

"There is nothing immodest in it," she returned, indignantly. "It is only prejudice. Everybody does it now; the greatest ladies in the land—even queens write books."

"Write books?" he repeated, puzzled.

"Which you think such a degrading occupation for a woman—immodest, unwomanly, conceited."

"That entirely depends upon the books—their style, the object for which they are written," he answered, feeling bound to stick to his colours.

"Well, I don't set up to rival Royalty in style, though the critics have said very nice things of me. As for an object, what object can one have better than to make an honest living or to benefit some good cause?"

"What in the world are you talking about? What have critics said of you?" he asked, alarmed, thinking that some paper must have taken up the cudgels on her behalf. "Save him from such friends!"

"Nothing but good. But, dear, believe me, I would not have deceived you had you not frightened me a little at first by your stern ideas."

"Stern ideas! Beatrix, explain this. You say you have a confession to make that ought to have been made before. Don't be afraid of me. Nothing would make me angry but mystery; at least, I hope not." He paused; her cheeks were burning, her eyes dropped down. "Tell me at once," he cried, with a new rush of

impatience, "who is that Italian—Montefalco? What have you to do—?"

He stopped, for she had looked up in such utter astonishment. Her eyes met his straight, and before them his shifted uneasily in sudden shame.

"Montefalco!" she repeated, amazedly. "What in the world has made you think of him?"

"I will tell you, if you will tell me exactly on what terms you stand with him."

"Terms! With Montefalco!" she cried, indignantly. "How should I be on terms of any sort with a person like that? Everard, are you mad?"

"Very nearly," he returned, miserably.

"Montefalco!" she went on, indignation growing, her eyes blazing with outraged pride. "How dare you even mention his name in connection with mine?"

"You seemed to think him worthy of such an honour and more, a week ago," returned her husband, bitterly. "I saw you, Beatrix. I saw you talking with him confidentially in the station portico. I saw your farewell, your eyes full of—oh! I don't know what! It nearly drove me mad!"

"Really, Everard, I could almost laugh at you for being so silly! You are worse than a boy of twenty. If you would let me speak, and not interrupt, I mean to tell you the whole story—of Montefalco and everything else."

"I cannot wait to hear a long story," cried Sir Everard, distractedly. "Tell me at once—who is Montefalco? How did he claim you as an old friend at Bigorre? And why did it startle you so to see him?"

She made a little pause, then looked at him straight, clear-eyed.

"He once gave me singing lessons," she said, gravely. "He fell in love with me; I cannot imagine why, for I never thought of him except as a singing-master. I told my father, and he stopped the lessons. That was all—every word."

"But still you speak to him—walk with him," he moaned.

She laughed. She could laugh now in the relief of having told so much of her story.

"That is an episode in the other tale which you keep stopping me from telling. You remember the poor Princess Castellucca at Bigorre, and how she asked me to take a box during their season at Coaliquay? I met her accidentally last Satur-

day in Whyte Street, and went into her hotel with her. She has been very unfortunate, and I felt it was partly my fault. I promised myself—not her—to help her, but I could not do it with your money, as you did not approve; so I wrote a novel, and took it to-day to post at Coaliquay, and there will be a big cheque coming for it presently that will quite put her straight again. That is all." "You wrote a novel!" ejaculated Sir Everard, in a tone far from complimentary to his wife's abilities.

"I have written lots of novels," she answered, penitently; "I lived upon them until I knew you. I had to live somehow, you see. Do forgive me, Everard; I won't do it any more, unless you say I may. I won't expect you to read them."

"But Montefalco!"

"I met him, and I let him walk to the station with me that he might tell me how to help the Princess—how her affairs really stand. She is too proud and refined to tell me herself."

"Is your name printed on the novels?" he asked, as new horrors presented themselves in succession.

"My dear Everard, no! I assure you the name of Laura Tigar brings much more fame and money with it than Lady Trevorton would do!"

"Laura Tigar! Oh!"

"And now, dear, confession is made; it is time for absolution."

CHAPTER XVI.—AND LAST.

"I DO NOT believe it," Helena told herself as firmly as she told Mr. Cullingworth. "It is a cleverly trumped-up story; but as we know from cases like the Tichborne case that there can be endless litigation and expense over the wildest impostures, it will be advisable to buy the man off. Find what he will take to hold his tongue, and give up his forged certificates, and I will find the money. My uncle will be only too glad to help me for my mother's sake."

"It is possible, of course, that it may be a fraud," admitted the lawyer, who did not see why some of the Carlaurus hush-money should not go into his pocket; "but my advice is, fight it out in the Courts. It will be no more expensive in the end, for the black mailing you will be otherwise subjected to will be simply unlimited."

Helena agreed to think about it.

A few days later, thought was scattered

to the winds. She had a letter from Lord Monkchester, saying, that as unpleasant rumours had reached him concerning the Treverton family, it would be better that the marriage should be put off farther until those rumours were effectually silenced. Helena read between the lines ; her lover had heard of the scandal, and had consequently thrown her over.

Like a wounded tigress she flew to the battle. She would clear her name, and would scatter her enemies in confusion. She rushed to Mr. Cullingworth, and bade him set in motion the mighty machinery of the law.

He was engaged, and she must wait. She sat in the outer office, champing, chafing. Then she thought she recognised a voice in the private office—her father's. With every nerve set and strained she listened, but she could hear no more ; nothing until the summons that her turn had come. Mr. Cullingworth was at liberty.

He was alone, looking very solemn, very sympathetic. Had she imagined that other voice ? She glanced round. There was another door to the private office.

After a little dry preamble of words as meaningless as the chords a performer strikes on a piano before beginning to play, the lawyer said :

"Sir Everard Treverton and Mr. Key, of Larrock and Key, have just been with me on the subject of this case."

She turned very pale ; then said, coldly : "And have they offered better terms than I ?"

"I am afraid they have given me information that makes it impossible to proceed."

There was a pause. He was accustomed to criminals of all colours—forgers, perjurers, burglars, dynamiters, murderers—but his heart quailed and his blood grew cold before the fierce eyes transfixing him now.

"It is most painful," he said, nervously ; "but you must know it. Sir Everard

admits the marriage with Emily Stort in 1863. Mr. Key has proofs of its perfect legality. It would be of no use whatever to proceed, as you must see."

"But I can proceed," she cried, in a frenzy. "It was bigamy, it was a criminal act, his marriage with my mother—it must be punished."

"No ; he believed his first wife to be dead. He could not be prosecuted."

Was she going mad ? the lawyer wondered. He hoped she would. There seemed no other way out of it, no other way of saving her the agony.

But she did not go mad altogether, though for a few months she was hardly accountable for her actions, and had to be carefully watched under restraint. For a few months she writhed and shrieked under the torture of fires she had drawn down from heaven by her impious hand. Then she awoke from the terrible nightmare ; from the wasting of flames that had not purged her, nor shown her light ; awoke, but not to sorrow, not to love—not even to repentance.

Sir Everard was very kind to her. He would fain have had her live at the Chase, and be still Miss Treverton, and had done his best for her sake, not his own, to hush the whole matter up ; but that would have been impossible for her. After much persuasion she accepted the handsome settlement he made upon her, but she refuses to call herself by his name. She calls herself Miss Sinclair, and lives in a pension abroad.

And Beatrice reigns unmolested at the Chase, happy, loved, and loving. And the Princess with her boys is there just now on a visit, and she no more cheats them, and offends Sir Everard by her imitation jewels. She wears real diamonds, and silk brocades and velvets, and looks every inch a real princess, though when her visit is over she is to sing at a theatre ; but at a salary far beyond her dream, and, alas ! still farther beyond her merit as an artist ! And she has no idea who really pays the inefficient piper.

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